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Introduction and Response to Priorities

Harmony Public Schools is a large, diverse nonprofit Charter Management Organization founded in 2000. Today, Harmony's 2,700+ teachers serve 40,000+ PK-12 students across seven Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and 60 campuses in Texas—95% of which are high-need. Compared to state averages, Harmony's student body includes a higher percentage of students of color, economically disadvantaged (ED) students, and English Learners (ELLs); Harmony's percentage of special education (SPED) students mirrors the state average (Appendix F1).

The network's mission is "to prepare each and every student for college and career by providing a safe, caring and collaborative atmosphere and a quality student-centered educational program with a strong emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)." This mission aligns with the Department of Education's goal to promote academic excellence, improve learning conditions, and prepare students for global competitiveness. Harmony has a history of outstanding mission outcomes:

1) Academic Excellence: Harmony consistently outperforms state averages in campus and student performance. All Harmony districts (i.e., regions within the network) and 96% of campuses earned A or B ratings in 2022 (vs. 81% of schools statewide).[1] Overall student proficiency rates are above state averages, and ED, ELL, SPED, African-American, and Hispanic student subgroups outperform their peers statewide (Appendix F2). Despite significant decreases in ELA/Reading scores amid the pandemic (as was true nationally), Harmony has already rebounded to pre-pandemic levels.

2) High-Quality Learning Conditions: Harmony campuses have positive culture. Seventy-six percent of Harmony students assess campus culture to be "Excellent" or "Good,"

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[1] Schools (Harmony and statewide) that were not rated by Texas in 2022 are excluded

with nine out of ten agreeing that Harmony has high expectations for all (Garness et al., 2022).

3) Global Competitiveness: Harmony prepares students for college and career success. Since its founding, 100% of Harmony students have earned college acceptance and 47% have attained a college degree within six years of high school graduation—compared to 30% of low-income graduates nationally (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2022).

Harmony aspires to raise the bar for student achievement even higher, but the COVID-19 pandemic introduced three major challenges to doing so. These challenges will be referred to as "Acute Needs" throughout this application. They include: 1) recovering learning in Math, 2) closing gaps between subgroups and Harmony averages, and 3) strengthening student culture and inclusion so as to address mental health and emotional well-being (page 7).

Harmony has a strong foundation in place to respond to these Acute Needs. In 2020, Harmony formulated a 2025 strategic plan with a research-based core priority to establish campus instructional leadership teams (ILTs) who can develop highly effective teachers to support student achievement (Appendix F3). Aligned to that priority, Harmony applied for and earned a 2020 TSL grant (TILT: Training Instructional Leadership Teams). Through TILT, Harmony successfully developed and implemented a research-based, comprehensive human capital management system (HCMS)—including a performance-based compensation system (PBCS)—for ILT members (Appendix F4). TILT has produced strong outcomes thus far, aligned to its intended impact (Garness et al., 2023):

1) Increased Leader Effectiveness: In 2021-22, nearly all TILT principals and assistant principals were rated Proficient or Accomplished (94% and 96%, respectively), and $3.8M in bonuses and stipends were awarded for excellent instructional leadership.

2) Higher Placement in High-Need Schools: Between 2019-20 and 2021-22, Harmony

saw a 65% increase in leader applications across campuses; candidate quality also increased as evidenced by a lower rate of withdrawn or rejected applications.

3) Increased Leader Retention: In 2021-22, principal retention at TILT campuses was higher than at non-TILT campuses (95% vs. 78%).

4) Increased Leader Longevity and Advancement: In 2021-22, 89 leaders were promoted within Harmony versus an average of 70 over the prior three years.

5) Improved outcomes across Qualified Opportunity Zones (QOZs) through communities of practice (COPs) focused on instructional leadership for college and career readiness: In 2021-22, 100% of non-Harmony educators who participated in the QOZ-wide COPs report that the events have contributed to improvement in college and career readiness at their schools. The TILT-funded activities that led to these outcomes will continue as the grant sunsets, according to the sustainability plan outlined in the 2020 application.

However, Harmony has also learned that there is new and different work to be done to drive progress toward mission. For this, Harmony seeks 2023 TSL funding for **TILT Forward**, which will improve and expand upon its strong foundational HCMS with a special emphasis on hard-to-staff campuses (page 6) and strengthen the ILTs' ability to address the network's Acute Needs and achieve Harmony's strategic plan goals. As a high-performing LEA meeting all statutory requirements (Appendix G), Harmony believes TILT Forward brings a competitive application for the 2023 TSL grant competition.

Absolute Priority #1: TILT Forward improves and expands upon Harmony's existing HCMS (including its PBCS) so that ILTs are better equipped to respond to the Acute Needs. TILT Forward 1) expands existing and develops new *Career Advancement* pathways characterized by increased responsibility and pay that reward and recognize effective leaders in hard-to-staff

schools and enable them to expand their leadership and results through hybrid roles and career ladders; 2) differentiates *Support and Feedback* for ILTs so that ongoing professional development (PD) opportunities increase effectiveness; 3) strengthens *Leader Culture and Inclusion* to increase the satisfaction and retention of effective, diverse staff; 4) increases fair, consistent implementation of *Leader Evaluations*, which reflect clear and fair measures of educator performance, based in part on demonstrated improvement in student academic achievement (Appendix F6); and 5) differentially rewards effectiveness in for leaders working in hard-to-staff schools via the *PBCS* (page 16).

Harmony has designed TILT Forward in collaboration with teachers, principals, and other network and school leaders. The components of TILT Forward directly tie to feedback from Harmony's TILT evaluation, which included survey results from over 2,000 teachers, ILT members, and network leaders as well as findings from over 100 interviews (page 8). TILT Forward is also based on research that affirms the potential impact of the work and informs implementation (page 18). In this way, TILT Forward *satisfies Absolute Priority #1*.

Absolute Priority #2: Nearly all (95%) of Harmony's campuses qualify as high-need, thus satisfying the application requirement that the majority of schools participating in the project are high-need (Appendix E). As a result, TILT Forward components with network-wide impact concentrate on high-need schools.

Several components of TILT Forward further concentrate on a subset of high-need campuses identified as hard-to-staff via the TILT Evaluation (page 6). First, the *Career Advancement* and *PBCS* components prioritize placement, retention, and rewards for leaders at these campuses. Second, the *Support and Feedback* and *Leader Culture and Inclusion* components are implemented first at these campuses so that they have priority access to

resources. In this way, TILT Forward *satisfies Absolute Priority #2***.**

Competitive Preference Priority #1: TILT Forward promotes educational equity and adequacy

in resources and opportunity for underserved students by 1) prioritizing hard-to-staff campuses

and 2) supporting ILTs to close gaps between subgroups and Harmony overall.

    1) Hard-to-Staff Campuses: Harmony's hard-to-staff campuses (inclusive of elementary,

middle, and high schools) have higher proportions of underserved students than Harmony

averages. There are several sources of inequity and inadequacy in resources and opportunity

within these campuses, even when compared to other high-need schools. One that is particularly

impactful is that principal retention at these campuses is lower than the Harmony average

(Garness, Slotnick, Qiao, & Liang, 2023). Research indicates that this at least in part explains

why student achievement on these campuses is lower than on non-hard-to-staff campuses (page

18). In response, TILT Forward differentially focuses on increasing the number, proportion, and

retention of experienced and effective leaders in these schools (page 13).

    2) Gaps between Subgroups and Harmony Overall: Many underserved student subgroups

within Harmony outperform their peers statewide, but achievement gaps *within* Harmony have

been exacerbated by the pandemic (page 7). Harmony identifies two major sources of this

inequity: 1) lack of ILT members from underrepresented backgrounds and 2) lack of support and

feedback for ILTs on strategies for gap closure. In response, TILT Forward increases the number

and proportion of educators from underrepresented backgrounds through the *Career*

Advancement and *Leader Culture and Inclusion* components. It also increases the effectiveness

of ILTs to promote gap closure through the *Support and Feedback* component. In these ways,

TILT Forward *satisfies Competitive Preference Priority #1***.**

Competitive Preference Priority #2: Improvements to the HCMS via TILT Forward bolster

Harmony's capacity to hire, support, and retain an effective and diverse ILT workforce. First, new *Career Advancement* opportunities help Harmony prepare a more diverse ILT workforce and close the gap between teacher and leader diversity (page 13)*.* Next, efforts to strengthen *Leader Culture and Inclusion* help Harmony support and retain a more diverse ILT workforce (page 15). Lastly, increasing the fairness and consistency of *Leader Evaluation* implementation promotes inclusive and bias-free human resources practices (page 15). Each of these components is supported by data systems, timelines, and action plans (page 32). In this way, TILT Forward *satisfies Competitive Preference Priority #2***.**

(a) Need for Project

(i) Project addresses specific gaps or weaknesses that have been identified

By acting on research that shows that school leadership matters for student outcomes (Branch et al., 2013; Grissom et al., 2021), TILT Forward targets Harmony's Acute Needs:

1) Recovering learning in Math: STAAR and EOC Math scores declined significantly amid the pandemic (by 25 and 40 percentage points, respectively). The network has experienced meaningful recovery since 2021, but performance is not back to pre-pandemic levels (41% in 2022 vs. 52% in 2019 in STAAR, 59% vs. 74% in EOC) (Garness, Slotnick, Qiao, & Liang, 2023).

2) Closing gaps between subgroups and Harmony averages: Gaps between underserved student subgroups and network-wide averages are significant; most critically, ELL and SPED subgroups have seven- to 33-percentage point gaps in Math and ELA/Reading when compared to Harmony averages (Appendix F2).

3) Strengthening student culture and inclusion. Student absences have increased amid the pandemic, especially among Hispanic students (with 28% having 20 or more absences).

Additionally, there are gaps in subgroups' experiences of school culture and inclusion; African-American students are less likely to rate school culture and climate as "Excellent" or "Good" (66% vs. 76% overall) (Garness et al., 2022).

TILT Forward does so by addressing specific gaps and weaknesses in its existing HCMS that were identified via the TILT Evaluation and input from Harmony stakeholders (Appendix C):

1) Current ILT pipelines do not meet school needs: Harmony's current career advancement pathways are not yet meeting hard-to-staff campuses' need for ILT members who are well-prepared to address Acute Needs. First, While Harmony has a Principal Residency Program—through which qualified, aspiring principals assume a one-year, full-time position as a resident at a high-need Harmony campus in advance of assuming an independent principalship in the following year—only 24% of residents were placed in the network's hard-to-staff schools in 2022; once principals are in the role, there are few defined pathways for further advancement. Second, Harmony does not have formal advancement opportunities for aspiring assistant principals. Third, none of Harmony's existing teacher-leader roles focus on Acute Needs, and the process for matching teachers to roles is informal.

Additionally, Harmony's ILT pipelines are insufficiently focused on increasing underserved students' access to well-prepared educators from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. In 2022-23, Harmony's ILT workforce was 43% people of color, versus 57% of the teacher workforce and 89% of students.

2) ILT members need more tailored PD, focused on Acute Needs: In 2022, only 71% of ILT teachers agreed that the PD they received is differentiated for their learning needs; as one described: "*Some things with PD have improved [...] Now we need differentiated training*"

(Garness et al., 2023). First, ILT support and feedback is not adequately differentiated by tenure. For example, Harmony's New Leader Academies support new principals, but only for the first year; there is not yet a targeted support model for second-year principals. Second, support and feedback for ILT members is not sufficiently focused on the network's Acute Needs (page 7). For example, Harmony's Core4 ambassadors coach ILT members on the network's Core4 Leadership Competencies (Appendix F4), but ambassadors are not yet trained to help ILT members apply those competencies in support of recovering math learning, closing achievement gaps, or strengthening school culture.

3) Leader satisfaction dropped amid COVID: Leader satisfaction as measured by the Net Promoter Score dropped from a pre-pandemic high of 26 to 8 in 2022-23.[2] This data aligns with national data showing that the pandemic has significantly impacted adults in the education sector—leading to high rates of leader dissatisfaction and resignation, which in turn are shown to negatively impact student outcomes (Jotkiss, 2022).

4) Leader evaluation system is not perceived as fair or consistent: Harmony's existing leader evaluation system covers most—but not all—ILT roles; campus instructional coaches are still evaluated according to the teacher evaluation system. Additionally, ILT members report that implementation of the system is not yet optimally fair, reliable, or credible—largely based on

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[2] Net Promoter Score, or NPS, is calculated by analyzing responses to "How likely is it that you would recommend Harmony Public Schools as a place to work." The percentage of those who responded between 0 and 6 ("Detractors") is subtracted from the percentage of those who responded between 9 and 10 ("Promoters"). Those who responded 7 or 8 are excluded ("Neutrals"). NPS scores range from -100 to 100. Source: https://www.netpromoter.com/know/

perceived differences in evaluators. As one district administrator reflected *"The framework is fine, but we are not consistent across the system. As a result, I think this impacts the issue of fair and equitable"* (Garness, Slotnick, Qiao, & Liang, 2023).

5) Current PBCS is insufficient to attract and retain leaders in hard-to-staff schools: Harmony currently offers placement and performance bonuses to leaders, but only 70% of ILT members believe Harmony encourages high-performing leaders to serve at high-need schools. The challenge is especially felt at Harmony's hard-to-staff schools, where leader retention is lower than network averages. Data indicates that additional rewards (beyond existing placement and individual performance bonuses) are required to attract and retain the highest-performing leaders at hard-to-staff schools. Eighty-eight percent of principals and 84% of ILT teachers rated such additional incentives and supports as "very important" in getting school leaders to consider serving hard-to-staff campuses (Garness, Slotnick, Qiao, Liang, Edminson & Kirkendol, 2023).

TILT Forward addresses the identified gaps above in Harmony's leader HCMS. In doing so, it increases the placement, growth, effectiveness, satisfaction, and retention of effective and diverse leaders; this strengthens Harmony's ability to address Acute Needs and accelerate mission outcomes (Appendix A).

(ii) Project integrates with or builds on related efforts to improve Relevant Outcomes

TILT Forward builds on the TILT program, funded by a $27.8M 2020 TSL grant. Harmony is in the final year of implementation, which includes five priorities designed to establish and support ILTs through a leader HCMS (Appendix F4). TILT has had a measurable impact on leader placement, effectiveness, retention, longevity, and advancement (page 3).

TILT Forward builds on these successes to improve and expand the leader HCMS by addressing gaps and weaknesses (page 8), integrating a focus on the network's Acute Needs,

prioritizing ILT diversity, and concentrating on hard-to-staff schools. These improvements and expansions increase ILT effectiveness, which increases educator effectiveness, which ultimately improves student outcomes (especially in areas identified as Acute Needs). See Appendix A.

Program components also integrate with aspects of Harmony's HCMS that are funded by State and non-TSL Federal resources. First, *Career Advancement* pathways build on Harmony's success with existing Teacher-Leader roles and the foundational Principal Residency Program, which are funded through Texas' Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) and Harmony's Education Innovation Research (EIR) grant. Second, improvement and expansion of ILT *Support and Feedback* complements existing PD funded via Title IIA, TIA, and EIR. Third, *Leader Culture and Inclusion* investments supplement funding from State General Funds that already support the district's Mentorship program. Fourth, *Leader Evaluation* improvements build on Title IIA and General Funds that enabled the baseline leader evaluation system. Fifth, funding for the *PBCS* adds to TIA and General Funds to increase the value of leader bonuses and stipends.

(iii) Project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning

Harmony's 2025 strategic plan is its comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students. The network is currently in year three of the plan, the goal of which is to support each and every student to succeed against a higher bar for excellence that includes not only high school graduation, but also college and career success. Over 12,000 Harmony stakeholders provided input on the plan, which includes six, mutually-reinforcing priorities: 1) Strengthen the academic model; 2) Establish principals and ILT as instructional leaders; 3) Focus network structure, roles, & accountability on campus success; 4) Set and act on a vision for diversity and inclusion; 5) Strengthen external support to

accelerate student success; and 6) Continuously improve through smart data and research processes. Implementation has been guided by concrete, measurable initiatives (Appendix F3).

TILT Forward is an essential project under Priority #2, as an improved and expanded HCMS increases the effectiveness of ILTs as instructional leaders who can support effective teaching, which in turn results in deeper learning. TILT Forward also contributes to Priority #4 by implementing the network's vision for diversity and inclusion via the HCMS. Finally, TILT Forward enables Priority #6 by equipping the network with powerful data about its instructional leaders for the purposes of continuous improvement.

(iv) Project will address the needs of the target population

TILT Forward ultimately addresses the needs of Harmony's primary target population: students, especially those in underserved subgroups and hard-to-staff schools. Students' Acute Needs (page 7) can be addressed in two, research-backed ways: 1) Ensuring students access schools with highly-effective ILTs and 2) ensuring students access leaders from backgrounds and communities that are representative of their experiences (Grissom et al., 2021). TILT Forward acts on these findings by investing in leader effectiveness through *Career Advancement* pathways and differentiated *Support and Feedback*, incentivizing leaders to serve in hard-to-staff settings via the *PBCS*, and promoting leader diversity through expanded *Career Advancement* pathways and a focus on *Leader Culture and Inclusion*.

TILT Forward directly focuses on another target population: ILTs, whose needs have been summarized as gaps and weaknesses in the current HCMS (page 8). They include increased *Career Advancement* opportunities, differentiated and targeted *Support and Feedback,* strong *Leader Culture and Inclusion*, more consistent *Leader Evaluations*, and a differentiated, expanded *PBCS*. These needs are particularly felt among leaders in hard-to-staff schools and

leaders of color. TILT Forward's components (page 13) directly respond to these needs using

research-based strategies for growth, effectiveness, satisfaction, and retention (page 18).

(b) Quality of Project Design

(i) Proposed project demonstrates a Rationale

TILT Forward (Appendix A) builds on TILT's rationale that strong instructional leaders

grow educator effectiveness, which improves student outcomes (page 18, Appendix F4).

The project components directly address evaluation findings about opportunities for

improving these Relevant Outcomes through improvements to and expansion of the HCMS:

1) Expand existing and develop new career advancement pathways: Evaluation findings

show that the process to select and place principals is not yet meeting campus needs (page 8),

and inexperienced principals are often assuming leadership roles. In response, TILT Forward

strengthens *Career Advancement* pathways into ILT roles—recognizing that preparing strong

principals also requires preparing strong assistant principals and Teacher-Leaders.

First, for principals, TILT Forward improves the Principal Residency Program via

programmatic updates that a) proactively attract potential residents from underrepresented

backgrounds to create a diverse pool of candidates from which to hire, and b) place residents at

hard-to-staff schools.

Second, for assistant principals, TILT Forward develops a new Assistant Principal

Residency Program—modeled off of the Principal Residency Program—with a similar focus on

diverse leaders and hard-to-staff schools.

Third, for teacher-leaders, TILT Forward establishes two new roles: Microcredential

Ambassadors, who help teachers and leaders attain microcredentials aligned to the network's

Acute Needs, and New Model Teachers, who produce resources and demonstrate high-leverage

strategies for instruction aligned to Acute Needs. While adding these new roles with well-defined responsibilities, TILT Forward also creates a data system to support strong recruitment, selection, and management of a diverse group of teacher-leaders across all available teacher-leader roles.

Fourth, TILT Forward creates a new leadership opportunity for leaders already in the role: Teacher-Leader and Leader Advisory Cabinets. These groups of approximately 25 effective leaders are trained to collect stakeholder data from their respective districts to inform input and feedback to Central Office leaders regarding network-wide strategy. TILT Forward models these Cabinets off of the success of the existing Teacher Advisory Cabinet, which has significant interest from staff and has led to meaningful improvements driven by stakeholder feedback.

These efforts increase the number of diverse leaders at Harmony—especially those who are well-prepared for work on hard-to-staff campuses. They also strengthen leader growth and effectiveness through models that align with best practices in leader preparation (page 19).

2) Differentiate the support and feedback for ILTs: Evaluation findings show that ILT members want more PD targeted to individual learning needs (page 8). In response, TILT Forward offers additional differentiate*d Support and Feedback*—with a focus on Acute Needs.

First, TILT Forward expands New Leader Academies to include second-year leaders. It also tailors the experience to focus on the pedagogical strategies of the Core4 Competencies (Appendix F4) and the network's Acute Needs.

Second, TILT Forward expands access to partner-led, role-differentiated, content-specific PD. This includes access to training opportunities via highly respected partners, such as the Harvard School Turnaround Leaders Program, Relay Graduate School of Education, and Rice University School Mathematics Project. TILT Forward prioritizes access to these PD offerings

for leaders in hard-to-staff schools.

Third, TILT Forward improves existing Harmony PD mechanisms to be more role-differentiated and targeted on Acute Needs. This includes hiring additional, role-differentiated Core4 Ambassadors and ensuring that all ambassadors are trained to focus on Acute Needs in their support for leaders. This also includes creating new microcredentials that align to the Acute Needs. TILT Forward launches this initiative in hard-to-staff schools (before expanding network-wide) so that they are first to access additional resources and support.

Via these initiatives, TILT Forward increases leader growth and effectiveness through PD opportunities that reflect the research-backed importance of ongoing, differentiated, targeted, and personalized support (page 20). These initiatives also increase leader satisfaction and retention given research aligning professional growth opportunities to these outcomes (page 18).

3) Strengthen leader culture & inclusion: Harmony data indicates that leader satisfaction dipped amid the pandemic (page 9). In response, TILT Forward deepens the network's focus on building leader culture and inclusion. This is especially important for diverse leaders at Harmony, who are currently underrepresented among school leadership.

First, TILT Forward creates a system to match ILT leaders to mentors based on affinity or shared background and identity, when requested. Second, TILT Forward engages outside experts to train Core4 Ambassadors, Mentors, and Professional Learning Community (PLC) leaders in practices that build strong ILT culture and inclusion. Via these initiatives, TILT Forward increases satisfaction and retention of leaders—especially diverse leaders.

4) Increase fair, consistent implementation of leader evaluations: Harmony's existing leader evaluation system is based on clear and fair measures of educator performance (Appendix F6), but *implementation* of the system is inconsistent across roles and individuals (page 9). In

response, TILT Forward expands the *Leader Evaluation* system and improves implementation.

First, TILT Forward expands the existing leader evaluation system to include instructional coaches, who are currently evaluated under the teacher evaluation system. Second, TILT Forward includes training for leader evaluators to promote consistency; this approach is modeled off of Harmony's successful model for calibrating across teacher evaluators.

Via these initiatives, TILT Forward increases leader growth and effectiveness through a system that appropriately provides ongoing, differentiated, targeted, and personalized feedback for improvement for every ILT role. TILT Forward also increases leader satisfaction and retention through a system that is perceived to be fair and consistent.

5) Differentially reward effectiveness in hard-to-staff schools: Evaluation findings show that hard-to-staff campuses have lower leader retention and lower student achievement outcomes than Harmony overall. The evaluation identifies several key strategies for placing and retaining high-performing principals in hard-to-staff campuses; these strategies are based both on research and ILT feedback. In response, TILT Forward implements key strategies by building upon the current *PBCS* to provide increased rewards for leaders on hard-to-staff campuses.

First, TILT Forward offers increased sign-on bonuses for highly qualified leaders who accept roles at hard-to-staff schools. Second, TILT Forward offers increased performance bonuses for highly qualified leaders who achieve strong results in hard-to-staff schools. Third, TILT Forward expands incentives for high-performing leaders in hard-to-staff schools to include new, non-financial awards such as PD funds, recruitment funds, and tuition assistance.

Via these initiatives, TILT Forward increases leader satisfaction and retention through a PBCS that incentivizes and rewards excellence in hard-to-staff schools.

To measure success, TILT Forward tracks both project-level outcomes and outcomes aligned to the network's ultimate impact as defined in the logic model (Appendix A):

Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
Increased placement of well-prepared, diverse, effective leaders ●55% of ILT members come from underrepresented backgrounds ●65% of leader residents are in hard-to-staff schools ***Increased leader growth & effectiveness*** ●300 ILT members participate annually in residency programs or Teacher-Leader roles ●85% of leaders are rated Proficient or above, with a less than 10 point gap across subgroups and 5 point gap for hard-to-staff schools ●70% of leaders show year-over-year improvement in the student growth component of their evaluations, with a less than 10 point gap across subgroups and 5 point gap for hard-to-staff schools ●80% of leaders rate evaluation implementation as fair with a less than 10 point gap across subgroups ***Increased leader satisfaction & retention*** ●50% of leaders earn a stipend or bonus from the PBCS with a less than 10 point gap across subgroups and 5 point gap for	***Improved student achievement, with no gaps, especially in Math*** ●100% of Harmony districts and 97% of campuses are rated A or B ●60% of students are proficient in ELA/Reading, with a less than 20 point gap across subgroups and 10 point gap for hard-to-staff schools ●55% of students are proficient in Math (i.e., back above pre-pandemic levels), with a less than 15 point gap across subgroups and 5 point gap for hard-to-staff schools ***Improved student culture and inclusion, with no gaps*** ●Students with 20+ absences decreases to 18% for Hispanic students, 14% for White students, 12% for African-American students, 10% for Asian students, and 15% for students of other races, with a less than 8 point gap across subgroups and 6 point gap for hard-to-staff schools ●80% of students rate their school culture and climate as "Good" or above, with a less than 10 point gap across subgroups

hard-to-staff schools ● Leader NPS increases to 10 with a less than 2 point gap across subgroups and those in hard-to-staff schools ● Leader retention increases to 95% with a less than 10 point gap across subgroups and 5 point gap for hard-to-staff schools	and 5 point gap for hard-to-staff schools ***Improved college and career readiness, with no gaps*** ● 100% of students earn acceptance to college ● 75% of students matriculate into a degree or certification within 18 months after high school graduation, with a less than 15 point gap across subgroups and 10 point gap for hard-to-staff schools

Harmony's evaluation partner, the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC), has a comprehensive plan to measure progress across all components using evaluation methods described on page 22.

Together, these project components increase the placement, growth, effectiveness, satisfaction, and retention of ILT leaders—especially diverse leaders and those in hard-to-staff schools. This directly supports Harmony's strategic plan priority of establishing strong ILTs, which is considered a primary lever to improve student achievement, student culture and inclusion, and college and career readiness across the network.

(ii) Proposed project includes a review of the literature, a plan for implementation, and the use of appropriate methodological tools

Review of the relevant literature: TILT Forward builds on the research base for the original TILT application while using additional research to inform HCMS improvements.

1) Foundational research behind Harmony's existing HCMS: Harmony's HCMS is based on research about the pivotal role instructional leaders play in driving student achievement, positive school culture, strong classroom instruction, and teacher growth and retention (Bellibaş

et al., 2020; Branch et al., 2013; Graczewski et al., 2009; Grissom & Bartanen, 2018; Hou et al., 2019; Parlar et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2008; Şahin, 2011; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Data from numerous credible research organizations and leading LEAs detail the mechanisms through which instructional leadership impacts student outcomes; it rallies teachers around a clear academic vision (Kraft et al., 2016), promotes teacher retention (Hughes et al., 2015), and fosters collective efficacy (Goddard et al. 2015).

Lessons from the Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline Initiative (PPI) indicate how to build strong instructional leadership based on work across six major LEAs with significant numbers of underserved students. PPI determined that LEAs must set leadership standards and vision that guide all organizational activities, offer rich preparation opportunities for school leaders focused on instruction, and provide on-the-job support and evaluation for school leaders. PPI LEAs that leveraged these strategies saw results. After three or more years, schools with supported principals outperformed comparison schools in both Reading and Math. Supported principals were also more likely to remain in their schools (Gates et al., 2019).

2) Overview of research for proposed improvement and expansion of Harmony's HCMS: The rationale and approach for each project component is backed by high-quality research findings; this, plus Harmony's plan to examine the effects of its project components (page 22) meet the grant's definition of "evidence-based."

2a) Expand existing and develop new career advancement pathways: Research shows that effective career advancement pathways increase leader engagement and commitment (Jia-Jun & Hua-Ming, 2022; Hedge & Rineer, 2017). It is especially important that these pathways prepare diverse school leaders, as principals of color are shown to increase recruitment and retention of teachers of color and increase academic achievement of students of color (Jones,

2002; Bartanen & Grissom, 2021). To act on these findings, studies emphasize the importance of preparation programs that are standards-aligned, cohort-based, and inclusive of real-world practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Turnbull et al., 2013; Wallace Foundation, 2016).

2b) Differentiate support and feedback: Research shows that effective PD grows educator skill and ability (Goodwin & Slotnik, 2018). To act on these findings, research emphasizes the importance of PD that is targeted, focused on both pedagogy and content, collaborative, ongoing, job-embedded, and connected to data and evaluation systems (Elmore, 2002).

2c) Strengthen leader culture & inclusion: Forty-two percent of secondary principals nationally report intention to leave their roles in the next three years, and this is especially true for principals from underrepresented backgrounds (Levin et al., 2020). Lack of support is cited as a common reason to leave (Doan et al., 2022; DeMatthews et al., 2021). To act on these findings, schools can build more supportive adult cultures that promote effort, energy, productivity, collaboration, communication, shared problem-solving, commitment, belongingness, motivation, and shared values (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Building an inclusive adult culture and providing culturally responsive supports—such as mentorship relationships between colleagues who share an affinity—have been shown to be especially important in retaining leaders of color (California Department of Education, 2023; Dixon & Griffin, 2019; Institute of Education Sciences, 2020; Steiner et al., 2022; Symonds & Hansen, 2022).

2d) Increase fair, consistent implementation of leader evaluations. Research shows that principal evaluation can deepen leader reflection, learning, effectiveness, and accountability (Orr, 2011). However, many principals report having limited access to high-quality feedback (Friedman, 2002). To act on these findings, schools can ensure that principal evaluation systems are built according to best-practice design principles—including investment in the training,

support, and evaluation of evaluators (Clifford et al., 2014).

2e.) Differentially reward effectiveness in hard-to-staff schools: Research shows that sign-on bonuses can influence recruitment (especially for hard-to-staff campuses) and that performance bonuses are correlated with principal satisfaction and retention (Chiang et al., 2015; See, et al., 2020; Wellington et al., 2016). At the same time, monetary incentives are but one important factor in principals' decisions to enter or stay in a position, so schools must consider non-financial incentives as part of a comprehensive system of rewards (Yan, 2020).

Plan for project implementation: Harmony's implementation plan includes a clear project definition, a strong management plan, a concrete approach to evaluating progress and outcomes, a financial plan for project execution and sustainability, and an approach to securing and sustaining stakeholder support.

Harmony has identified concrete projects to enact TILT Forward components (page 13); in doing so, Harmony has been strategic about prioritization of projects so as to optimize for impact, feasibility, and sustainability.

Harmony has also translated the projects into a detailed management plan (page 28); in doing so, Harmony has been thoughtful about project roles, timing, and sequencing to ensure the network's capacity and effectiveness (page 32).

Harmony's evaluation plan is designed to assess project process (e.g., implementation fidelity and effectiveness) and outcomes (page 22). This equips Harmony with data to understand the relationships between its actions and outcomes so as to inform continuous improvement.

Harmony's financial plan ensures that project activity can be funded through a combination of the TSL grant award and Harmony's match commitment (page 36). Aligned with Harmony's approach to major past initiatives, the network plans for the work to be sustained

through State resources.

Harmony has already secured partner and stakeholder support for TILT Forward (page 42 and Appendix C). This important stakeholder engagement continues throughout implementation, both through planned implementation activities and more formal evaluation efforts.

Use of appropriate methodological tools: Harmony, in its partnership with CTAC, has a well-defined evaluation plan for TILT Forward (page 22). This plan includes use of methodological tools including interviews and focus groups, surveys, ILT demographic and evaluation data, recruitment and retention data, financial incentive payout data, micro-credentialing data, student data (achievement, demographic, and attendance), and artifacts. These tools ensure successful achievement of project objectives by informing assessment of 1) fidelity and quality of the implementation, 2) progress toward project objectives, and 3) whether the implementation activities are what actually drove project objectives.

(iii) Evaluation methods will provide periodic assessment of progress toward goals

CTAC uses a two-fold evaluation strategy to support TILT Forward. **Part 1** is comprehensive, includes formative and summative evaluations, and focuses on the overall TSL project. **Part 2** is targeted, focusing on the study of Harmony's new comprehensive structure of incentives and supports for placing high-performing principals in hard-to-staff schools. The resultant analyses provide formative and summative performance feedback to Harmony and inform mid-course improvements.

Part 1. Comprehensive Evaluation of the TSL Project

Using a mixed-methods approach with both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, CTAC carries out an ongoing *formative evaluation* to provide regular performance feedback and assessment for course adjustments and a *summative evaluation* to assess progress towards

the intended and ultimate impacts.

The multiple sources of data include: a) interviews and focus groups with educators and parents; b) survey responses from educators, parents, and students (5th grade and above); c) teacher, principal, and ILT member demographic and evaluation data; d) teacher and principal recruitment and retention data; e) financial incentive payout data; f) micro-credentialing data; g) student data (achievement, demographic, and attendance); and h) artifacts. The following evaluation questions and their connection to specific project components guides the evaluation of the project with a focus on both the implementation and overall impact of TILT Forward.

Evaluation Questions	Component	Data Source
To what extent is TILT Forward being implemented with fidelity?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Surveys; interviews and focus groups; artifacts
What factors enhance or impede effective implementation of the project?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Survey; interviews and focus groups; artifacts
To what extent does TILT Forward improve the instructional effectiveness of teachers, principals and ILT members?	1, 2, 4	Principal (T-PESS), teacher (H-TESS), and ILT (H-TESS) member evaluation; artifacts
To what extent does TILT Forward increase the diversity of effective teachers and principals, and promote equity in student access to a more diverse group of effective teachers and principals?	1, 3	Surveys; interviews and focus groups; artifacts; teacher, principal, and ILT member demographic and evaluation data
What is the impact of TILT Forward on improving student outcomes	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Student demographic, attendance, and achievement (STAAR, NWEA MAP,

(achievement, student culture and inclusion, college and career readiness) and closing the gaps between subgroups and Harmony averages?		End of Course), including measures on student college and career readiness; surveys
To what extent does TILT Forward increase campus leader and teacher recruitment, satisfaction, and retention?	2, 3, 4, 5	Principal, teacher, and ILT member demographic and evaluation data; financial incentive payout; micro-credentialing; recruitment and retention data; artifacts; surveys; interviews and focus groups

In assessing the fidelity with which TILT Forward is implemented and the effect it has on key outcomes, the evaluation is specifically designed to help inform and continuously improve Harmony's efforts over the life of the grant and achieve the project's intended impact and ultimate goals aligned to Harmony's 2025 strategic plan.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews and Focus Groups. CTAC conducts confidential annual interviews and focus groups with educators and parents using protocols developed with Harmony. Protocols are customized to the role of the participant and examine perceptions of TILT Forward's implementation and impact CTAC conducts thematic analyses to identify common themes and key issues in the discussion based on similarities across interview and focus group participants.

Surveys. CTAC reviews data from three types of surveys: 1) an annual CTAC-developed and conducted TILT Forward survey that seeks feedback from Harmony staff specifically about TILT Forward implementation; CTAC then conducts thematic analysis and Mann-Whitney U tests to examine the statistical significance of the differences across groups and

years; 2) PD Feedback Surveys circulated on an ongoing basis at the conclusion of all PD sessions funded through TILT Forward; and 3) School Climate Surveys for educators, parents, and students (administered annually by Harmony and reviewed by CTAC).

Teacher, Principal, and ILT Member Data. CTAC analyzes teacher, principal, and ILT member evaluation data gathered from Harmony-conducted observations and reviews evaluation ratings on five indicators embedded in the Harmony Teacher Evaluation and Support System (H-TESS) rubric: 1) setting instructional outcomes; 2) managing classroom procedures; 3) using questioning and discussion techniques; 4) engaging students in learning; and 5) using assessment in instruction. CTAC also analyzes and reviews principal evaluation data. Harmony principal evaluations assess whether principals attain year-end goals in two overarching categories: professional practice and student growth. The evaluations are aligned to five components of the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T- PESS) rubric: 1) instructional leadership; 2) human capital; 3) executive leadership; 4) school culture; and 5) strategic operations. CTAC also analyzes assistant principal, instructional coach, and teacher-leader evaluation data.

Staff Recruitment and Retention Data. CTAC reviews staff recruitment and retention data. With respect to recruitment, CTAC analyzes the educational qualifications, professional credentials, and experience levels of job applicants. CTAC also reviews staff retention rates across the Harmony network and disaggregates the data by professional role, TILT Forward campus status, and teacher evaluation ratings.

Financial Incentive Payout Data. CTAC reviews data related to bonuses and stipends awarded in TILT Forward through Harmony's PBCS.

Micro-Credentialing Data. A micro-credential is a digital certification indicating a TILT

Forward principal or instructional team member has mastered a specific competency. CTAC reviews data on program offerings, participation, and credit issuance.

Student Data (Achievement, Demographic, and Attendance). To assess the impact of TILT Forward on student achievement and gap closure, CTAC analyzes outcomes on NWEA MAP, STAAR assessments, and End-of-Course (EOC) exams at TILT Forward campuses and a set of comparison schools extrinsic to the Harmony network, as described below.

At the beginning of the first project year, CTAC conducts school-level analysis to form the comparison group for Harmony schools by using Propensity Score Matching (PSM) techniques. The PSM procedure predicts the probability of participating in the TILT Forward program (i.e., treated) based on a rich set of observable and measurable variables, including school-level achievement measure, geographic location (urban or rural), school type, school size, and school-level student, teacher and principal characteristics in Year 0 (the baseline year)—all publicly available data. The predicted probability is then used to select a set of comparison schools from surrounding districts.

CTAC employs a school-level Difference-in-Difference (DiD) model to estimate the impact of TILT Forward on student achievement. Specifically, by comparing TILT Forward schools to the above-described and identified schools both before and after the implementation of the TILT Forward initiative, the model controls for observable and measurable student and teacher characteristics that may have contributed to student growth. In addition, it allows for a higher level of "control" over time-invariant, unobservable, and immeasurable factors such as a student's innate ability. The basic structure of the DiD model in estimating the effect of TILT Forward on student achievement is shown in Appendix F7.

In addition to the PSM and DiD analysis, CTAC also conducts analyses on students'

college and career readiness (i.e., AP/IB course participation and pass rates and graduation and college enrollment rates) and examines student demographic and attendance data. These data are retrieved from the HPS data system.

Artifacts. CTAC quarterly reviews artifacts that provide the contexts and progresses related to TILT Forward implementation. These include, non-exhaustively, the dedicated TILT Forward website, PBCS plans and proposed changes, PD resources, and instructional support materials.

Performance Feedback and Dissemination of Evaluation Learnings. CTAC's evaluation enables regular performance feedback and assessment of progress towards achieving the project's intended outcomes. All evaluative reports are made publicly available on the Harmony dedicated website.

In summer of each project year, CTAC provides a management report with interim analyses and findings. In winter of each project year, CTAC provides a formative evaluation report with complete analyses and findings to date. At the end of the project, CTAC provides the summative evaluation report. *All formative and summative evaluation reports are presented* to the Harmony CEO, Board of Trustees, leadership team, Chief Program Officer and program team, and project staff. On a bi-weekly basis, CTAC also provides regular evaluative updates to the TILT Forward Project Co-Leads.

Part 2. Study of Harmony's Comprehensive Structure of Incentives and Supports

The Study. TILT Forward develops a new comprehensive structure of incentives and supports for placing high-performing principals in hard-to-staff schools. The new structure includes additional compensation, flexible budgetary funds (to stimulate instructional innovation), professional learning enhancers (e.g., visits to high-need schools that are performing at high levels, professional development study opportunities, etc.), and family transition enhancers

(including moving support).

CTAC will conduct a study of the new structure using the following questions:

- Is the new structure of incentives and supports being implemented with fidelity?

- Do school leaders and teachers perceive the new structure of incentives and supports as fair and equitable?

- What are the effects of the new structure of incentives and supports on student and educator performance? Has the number of high-performing principals increased in hard-to-staff schools?

- How can the new structure of incentives and supports be improved?

In conducting this study, CTAC uses surveys, interviews, and focus groups to examine the perceptions and changes of perceptions of administrators and teachers over time. To minimize the time demand for educators, questions addressing these issues are incorporated in the survey and interview protocols used to gather data for the formative and summative evaluations. CTAC also utilizes HCMS records and student achievement data to test (ANOVA or t-test) such relationships as leadership practice ratings and student achievement at the campus, district, and network levels. CTAC presents the findings and recommendations to the Harmony leadership team; they are also publicly available on the Harmony website.

(c) Quality of Management Plan

Project will achieve objectives on time and within budget

Harmony has deep expertise implementing projects on time and within budget, as built through successful management of numerous multi-million federal grant projects and other strategic initiatives. Harmony has identified four factors important to its success: 1) ongoing time allocations from a highly qualified grant management team; 2) network structures to implement

change efficiently and effectively; 3) ambitious yet feasible timelines with clear project

objectives and milestones, and 4) a concrete, reasonable budget with effective financial controls.

    1) Highly qualified grant management team: Harmony's seasoned executive team is

accountable for project outcomes, drawing on their extensive experience administering six major

federal awards over the last 11 years. Implementation is steered by Project Co-Leads with

support from a Project Advisor and Executive Sponsor. They collaborate with team members

across Harmony, including several seasoned in federal grant management, particularly TSL.

Each team member holds oversight and responsibility for at least one project component:

Executive Sponsor and Project Advisor, ██ ██████ ██████ **(Director of Leadership**

Development and Project Director for TSL Grant): In this role, ██ ██████ *oversees and*

guides the Project Co-Leads and manages budget tracking, analysis, and implementation with

the support of the Academics, Talent, and Finance departments; these departments have

previously worked together on grant management and understand the requirements of large-scale

implementation. As Harmony's designated Project Director for all major federal grants including

RTT-D, EIR, TIF, and TSL, ██ ██████ has extensive experience leading design, rollout,

implementation support, evaluation, and sustainability of multi-year, major federal grant

projects. As a former Harmony STEM teacher, principal, and Central Office director of

leadership development and curriculum, he has expertise in HCMS, PBCS, career pathways,

stakeholder engagement, budgeting, and grant reporting.

Project Co-Lead, ██ ██████ ██████ **(Director of Professional Learning):** In this role, ██

██████ *drives implementation TILT Forward components*, building off her role as Project Co-

Lead for the 2020 TSL grant. ██ ██████ has experience in leadership development, including

development of online trainings aligned to the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System

and administration of the PowerSchool and Schoology learning management systems. She has more than 20 years of experience as an instructional coach and project manager, and she is currently pursuing her superintendent certification at the University of Texas at Tyler.

Project Co-Lead, ██ ███████ █████████ **(TIF Grant Facilitator and Curriculum Director):** ██ █████████ *drives implementation TILT Forward components* in partnership with ██ █████ ██ ████████ utilizes his experience as a classroom teacher and instructional coach to ensure that grant-funded programs meaningfully impact school practices and serve students' and teachers' critical needs.

Executive Team, ██ ████ ████████ **(Chief Program Officer):** ██ █████████ plays a key role in *TILT Forward design and implementation,* including continuing his role in securing and sustaining partnerships with leading education organizations such as Solution Tree, TeachPlus, ASCD, Uncommon Schools, and the Jim Knight Group. As CPO, ██ █████████ oversees curriculum and instruction, ILTs, PLCs, coaching, and school culture. Prior to becoming CPO, ██ █████████ held roles as Harmony director of curriculum and assessment, dean, and teacher.

Executive Team, ██ █████ ██████ **(Chief Human Resources Officer):** ██ ████ *advises on project design and implementation*, building off his role as Project Advisor for the 2020 TSL grant. As CHRO, ██ █████ leads network-wide human resources systems. He brings expertise with Harmony, having joined Harmony in 2006 as an assistant principal before serving as assistant director of special programs, HR director, and director of global talent.

Executive Team, ██ █████ █████████ **(Chief Development Officer):** ██ ████████ ensures TILT Forward's long-term financial sustainability by *leading fundraising efforts to offset costs beyond completion of the grant period*. As CDO, ██ █████████ has raised over $40M in philanthropic support since 2020 to fund programs that benefit Harmony students. ██ █████████ is

deeply familiar with the Texas fundraising landscape and brings a background as a former principal, district superintendent, and director of academics.

Evaluation Lead, ▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮ (CTAC CEO): ▮▮ ▮▮▮ has overseen the growth of CTAC into a leading provider of technical assistance, evaluation services, and policy support, with expertise on TIF and TSL. ***CTAC has worked with Harmony to research and evaluate multiple prior grant projects***; CTAC has also published multiple studies on the effectiveness of TILT. ▮▮ ▮▮▮▮ has been the lead or co-author of numerous evaluations of PBCS and has provided briefings to members of the US Congress, US Department of Education, state legislatures and education departments, and the media.

2) Network structures to implement change: Harmony's clear and effective network structure, roles, and accountability expectations have enabled its growth and success over the past 20+ years. These include defined roles, responsibilities, and decision rights across Central Office, District Offices, and campuses in implementation of grant-funding programs:

2a) Central Office holds primary responsibility for network-wide design and implementation oversight. Central Office has established expertise in developing organization-wide systems, processes, and policies that ensure a consistent bar of excellence for districts and campuses, build their capacity to meet that bar, and create a culture of and system for accountability for each campus. Additionally, Central Office directly implements key components of TILT Forward, including *Career Advancement*, *Leader Evaluation*, and *PBCS*.

2b) District Offices are the critical bridge between Central Office and campuses that facilitate and monitor campus-level implementation. District Offices directly execute the *Support and Feedback* and *Leader Culture and Inclusion* key components. They also provide operational and financial services that enable campus leaders to focus on instruction.

2c) Campuses are responsible for improving student outcomes by leveraging the benefits of TILT Forward. ILTs participate in TILT Forward by hosting aspiring leaders, engaging in *Support and Feedback* activities, and contributing to leader *Culture and Inclusion*. In doing so, ILTs create more effective learning environments, better support teachers, and adapt Harmony's systems and strategies to local needs.

3) Ambitious, feasible timeline with clear objectives and milestones: The activities and milestones for this project are designed to enable Harmony to achieve its project objectives (Appendix A) (*note that sub-activities are *italicized* and milestones are **bolded**).

Major activities and milestones	Timing
Grant Management	
1. Finalize project budget with key stakeholders	10/23
2. Submit ongoing grant requirements to the DOE	Per grant rqts
3. Build and launch change management plan—including communications, training, and engagement opportunities—to build awareness, understanding, and buy in for TILT Forward initiatives	10/23-end
Component 1: Expand existing & develop new career pathways	
1. Expand Principal Residency Program	10/23-9/24
1A. Revise program selection/placement process and programming	*10/23-1/24*
1B. Recruit and select new residents according to revised process	*3/24-6/24*
1C. Launch expanded residency program in select hard-to-staff schools	***9/24***
2. Launch Assistant Principal Residency	10/23-9/24

2A. Design program selection/placement process and programming	*10/23-6/24*
2B. Recruit and select new residents	*3/24-6/24*
2C. Launch new residency program in select hard-to-staff schools	***9/24***
3. Expand Teacher-Leader Career Ladders	10/23-9/25
3A. Establish new Teacher-Leader roles	*10/23-2/24*
3B. Select teachers for new Teacher-Leader roles	***7/24-8/24***
3C. Revise practices for assigning Teacher-Leader roles	*2/25-5/25*
3D: Roll out updated process for assigning Teacher-Leader roles	***9/25***
4. Develop Advisory Cabinets	10/23-9/24
4A. Launch Teacher-Leader Advisory Cabinet (using Teacher Advisory Cabinet model)	***10/23***
4B. Via partnership, define program and recruit/select members for Leader Advisory Cabinet	*10/23-5/24*
4C. Via partnership, train members	*6/24*
4D. Launch Leader Advisory Cabinets	***9/24***
5. Periodically assess and refine component as needed	10/23-end
Component 2: Differentiate the support and feedback for ILTs	
1. Expand New Leader Academies	1/24-9/24
1A. Build Year 2 curriculum and support plan	*1/24-6/24*
1B. Launch Year 2 of New Leader Academies	***9/24***

2. Expand access to partner-led, role-differentiated PD for Acute Needs	10/23-6/24
2A. Identify partners and finalize agreements	*10/23-12/23*
2B. Recruit and select PD participants, with focus on hard-to-staff schools	*1/24-5/24*
2C. Launch partner-led PD opportunities	**6/24**
3. Revise existing Harmony-developed PD to be more role-differentiated and focus on Acute Needs	10/23-1/25
3A. Revise coaching model to focus on Acute Needs	*10/23-12/23*
3B. Define role-differentiated responsibilities for Core4 Ambassadors	*10/23-12/23*
3C. Recruit and select additional Core4 Ambassadors	**1/24-3/24**
3D. Train new and existing Ambassadors on updated model	**4/24-6/24**
3E. Develop new microcredentials aligned to Acute Needs	*10/23-12/24*
3F. Release new microcredentials, with focus on hard-to-staff schools	**1/25**
4. Periodically assess and refine component as needed	10/23-end
Component 3: Strengthen leader culture & inclusion	
1. Match Leaders to PLCs and Mentors by Affinity	01/24-08/24
1A. Create matching system	*01/24-06/24*
1B. Facilitate matching for SY24-25 according to new system	***06/24-08/24***
2. Train Ambassadors, Mentors, and PLC Leaders on Adult Culture & Inclusion	10/23-09/24
2A. Secure partner for Adult Culture and Inclusion training	*10/23-12/23*
2B. Revise Ambassador, Mentor, and PLC Leader expectations & resources	*10/23-12/23*

2C. Train Ambassadors, Mentors, and PLC Leaders on expectations & resources	*01/24-08/24*
2D. Launch redesigned programs in hard-to-staff schools	**09/24**
3. Periodically assess and refine component as needed	10/23-end
Component 4: Increase fair, consistent implementation of leader evaluations	
1. Expand Evaluation System to Include Instructional Coaches	10/23-9/24
1A. Revise instructional coach evaluation rubrics and processes	*10/23-12/23*
1B. Pilot new approach with a subset of coaches	*1/24-6/24*
1C. Launch new instructional coach evaluations network-wide	**9/24**
2. Establish Training for Leader Evaluators	5/24-6/25
2A. Design training for leader evaluators	*5/24-8/24*
2B. Train evaluators on start-of-year eval process and practices	*8/24-9/24*
2C. Implement revised start-of-year eval process and practices	**9/24**
2D. Train evaluators on end-of-year eval process, practices, & calibration	*1/25-3/25*
2E. Implement revised end-of-year eval process and practices	**3/25-6/25**
3. Periodically assess and refine component as needed	10/23-end
Component 5: Differentially reward effectiveness in hard-to-staff schools	
1. Tailor the PBCS for Hard-to-Staff Schools	10/23-1/25
1A. Design and budget for revised PBCS	*10/23-12/23*
1B. Communicate revised PBCS process	*2/24-3/24*

1C. Launch new performance bonus approach	*6/24*
1D. Launch new sign-on bonus approach	*8/24*
1E. Launch new non-financial incentive approach	*1/25*
2. Periodically assess and refine component as needed	10/23-end

Harmony's Project Advisor and Project Co-Leads manage this timeline to ensure that milestones are completed on time and that progress is made on reaching project objectives. They do so by a) building detailed implementation plans aligned to this overall plan; b) identifying specific leaders and departments to own project activities; c) establishing communication and collaboration structures (e.g., meetings, implementation dashboards, status updates) that move progress forward; and d) regularly implementing lessons learned from CTAC's formative evaluations about implementation quality and impact.

4) Concrete, reasonable budget with effective financial controls. First, Harmony's budget for TILT Forward is concretely defined: a total of $25.8M. Of this, $15.0M (58%) is requested from TSL; the remaining $10.9M (42%) in Match Funds come from State sources that currently fund Harmony LEAs. Because Harmony's Match Funding is 73% of the requested TSL budget, Harmony meets and exceeds the 50% cost-sharing threshold as defined by the grant (Appendix D). Harmony's budget identifies specific costs to execute TILT Forward (see the Budget Worksheet and Narrative).

Second, Harmony's budget is reasonable. The organization uses data from past federal grant projects and other budgets to inform estimates for TILT Forward. As a large network, Harmony also leverages economies of scale to provide services at a lower cost-per-leader.

Third, Harmony is skilled at managing large-scale projects to ensure they are completed within budget. To do so, Harmony a) clearly communicates the project budget clearly to project team members; b) identifies a budget owner to regularly account for actual versus budgeted costs; c) uses data to inform regular conversations among project leadership about any changes needed to keep the project within-budget.

(d) Adequacy of Resources

(i) Likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement

TILT Forward improves Harmony's HCMS, which improves leader outcomes, which improves student outcomes (Appendix A). TILT Forward is likely to realize these systemic improvements because of 1) a solid research base for the project; 2) Harmony's organizational capacity to effect systemic change; and 3) a strong foundational HCMS from which to build.

1) Solid research base. Research shows that a strong HCMS improves leader growth, effectiveness, satisfaction, and retention (page 18). Improved instructional leadership, in turn, improves student outcomes (page 18). TILT Forward's logic model rests on this research, and the specific project components also draw from evidence-based best practice (page 19).

2) Organizational capacity to effect systemic change. Harmony has implemented many major initiatives that resulted in systemic change, including six major federal awards over the past 11 years: 1) $30M Race to the Top-District (RTT-D) in 2012 focused on deepening project-based learning; 2) $27M Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) in 2016 focused on teacher effectiveness and retention; 3) $8M Education Innovation Research (EIR) in 2018 focused on translating the network's STEM model from secondary to elementary grades; 4) $28M Teacher and School Leader Incentive Fund (TSL) in 2020 (page 3); and 5-6) Charter Schools Program (CSP) grants in both 2011 and 2023 ($5M and $18M, respectively) focused on expanding the number of high-

quality seats across the network. From these efforts, Harmony has built capacity to steward

Federal resources in service of system change and improvement; this includes:

a) A codified approach to developing, piloting, and rolling out projects across the system;

b) Commitment to continuous improvement—with a data-driven culture and feedback

loops embedded in existing processes—enabled by customizable dashboards;

c) Long-standing partnerships with research institutions, including CTAC, to measure

quality of programming;

d) Seasoned staff with proven track record of managing high-impact programs across the

Harmony network—including through grant-funded initiatives (page 28);

f) Dedicated resources for research, evaluation, and best practice sharing. Harmony

employs a full-time research scientist, ██ ████████ ████ who publishes in peer-

reviewed journals (e.g., *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, *The Journal of

STEM Education*), presents at national conferences (e.g., American Educational Research

Association), and authors books about the Harmony STEM evidence base (*STEM

Education 2.0* and *A Practice-based Model of STEM Teaching: STEM Students on the

Stage (SOS)™*). Harmony also established an Innovation Department, which

disseminates successful Harmony practices to public schools throughout the country.

These resources and approaches ensure that grant-funded initiatives are well-planned and

researched, faithfully executed, continuously improved, and effectively scaled and sustained—

within Harmony and beyond.

3) Strong foundational HCMS. Harmony's existing HCMS has already supported

systemic improvements (page 3). Improvements to this HCMS via TILT Forward accelerate

change and deepen impact by addressing data-informed gaps and weaknesses (page 8) and employing research-backed strategies (page 18).

(ii) Project will build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services

TILT Forward builds the capacity of *campus leaders* to provide improved services to students and educators. TILT Forward also builds the capacity of the *Harmony system* to provide improved and expanded services to instructional leaders via the HCMS. Each TILT Forward project component builds local capacity in both of these ways:

1) Building *Career Advancement* pathways increases educators' capacity to be instructional leaders; it also equips Harmony with a "grow your own" approach to preparing a diverse pipeline of ILT members, especially for hard-to-staff schools.

2) Differentiating *Support and Feedback* improves leader capacity to excel in their roles; it also builds Harmony's capacity to deliver improved PD, especially aligned to Acute Needs.

3) Strengthening *Leader Culture and Inclusion* supports diverse, high-performing leaders to stay in their roles, thereby increasing their capacity to have long-term impact on students; it also builds Harmony's capacity to support leaders' mental health and emotional well-being.

4) Increasing the fairness and consistency of *Leader Evaluations* builds the capacity of leaders to use evaluations for continuous improvement; it also builds Harmony's capacity to identify and address both outstanding and sub-standard leader performance.

5) Differentially rewarding effectiveness in hard-to-staff schools via the *PBCS* also encourages leaders to stay, thereby increasing their capacity to have long-term impact on students. The PBCS' focus on hard-to-staff campuses increases Harmony's capacity to improve services for those schools' leaders and students.

(iii) Resources the applicant has to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including multi-year financial and operating model, commitment of partners, and evidence of broad support

Since its founding, Harmony has sustained growth and effectiveness through strong fiscal and operational planning, commitments of partners, and broad stakeholder support. This foundation will enable Harmony to sustain TILT Forward beyond the length of the grant.

Financial and Operational Sustainability: Several factors support *financial* sustainability of TILT Forward components. Core sources of Harmony State funding are projected to increase in coming years. Texas' TIA (Teacher Incentive Allotment) awards funding for LEAs based on the number of teachers recognized as high-performing via an approved evaluation system. As Harmony's leader HCMS improves, additional teachers achieve high performance evaluation ratings, and Harmony's TIA funding increases. Likewise, as Harmony implements its recent CSP grant to open 8,000 new seats across 12 new schools over the next 5 years, it accesses additional State General Funds as a result of increased enrollment.

Additionally, while Harmony has limited reliance on philanthropy (by design), the network has proven ability to raise funds—including $40M in commitments secured since 2020.

Harmony's structure also supports financial sustainability, as demonstrated by the network's ability to sustain major components of the RTT-D and TIF grants. As a large organization, Harmony benefits from efficiencies of scale. The network also has strong fiscal management practices with a AAA rating from S&P Global and an A rating in FIRST (Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas).

Other factors promote TILT Forward's *operational* sustainability. Harmony's operational plan involves integrating project components into existing departments, roles, systems, and

structures—therefore making those changes part of "business as usual." Harmony's clear roles, responsibilities, and decision rights across Central Office, District Offices, and Campuses (see Appendix F5 and page 31) support implementation fidelity and sufficient capacity to execute complex initiatives. Additionally, Harmony's culture and system of continuous improvement—fueled by data and stakeholder feedback—allows it to assess progress and adjust as needed. As just one example, Harmony's Teacher Advisory Cabinet has used network data to recommend changes to PD resources, performance bonuses, and implementation of new lesson preparation expectations. These recommendations have led to real-time adjustments.

Harmony has a specific plan to sustain each project component after the grant expires:

First, Harmony will sustain the *Career Advancement* component by ensuring ongoing implementation of the Residency Programs, new teacher-leader roles, and Advisory Cabinets. This work integrates into Harmony's Leadership Development department, a part of the network's larger Human Resources (HR) department, which leads other career advancement opportunities such as teacher-leader roles and the Teacher Advisory Cabinet. The $1.8M annually required to sustain the work funded via TSL is covered by State TIA funds.

Second, Harmony will sustain the *Support and Feedback* by embedding the New Leader Academy Year 2 track, effective external partnerships, and new internal PD offerings into Harmony's existing suite of PD offerings, which are curated jointly by Harmony's Leadership Development and Curriculum & Instruction departments; the latter is a part of Harmony's larger Program department. While some aspects of this component are one-time costs (e.g., new microcredentials), others involve external partnerships or stipended roles that require ongoing funding, estimated at $0.8M annually. This is covered by State TIA and Federal Title IIA funding, which fund efforts to improve teacher and principal quality.

Third, Harmony will sustain the *Culture and Inclusion* component by embedding the new matching system and Core4 ambassador, mentor, and PLC leader practices into the work of Harmony's Program department. After partnerships for initial design and development funded by TSL, Harmony will integrate the matching approach and new leader practices into existing PD systems and structures; this limits the ongoing costs of this component.

Fourth, Harmony will sustain the *Leader Evaluation* component through effective uptake of the instructional coach evaluation system and ongoing leader-evaluator training. This work improves the work of Harmony's HR department, which leads the current teacher and leader evaluation systems. The improvements enabled by TSL integrate with existing work and capacity of this department; this limits the ongoing financial need related to this component.

Fifth, Harmony will sustain the *PBCS* component by adding differential rewards for highly effective leaders in hard-to-staff schools to its ongoing system for incentivizing leader placement and performance. This strengthens the work of Harmony's Strategic Compensation department, which oversees Harmony's PBCS. The $2.1M annually required to sustain the work is covered by State TIA and General Funds.

Commitment of Partners: Two types of partnerships have been and will be essential to TILT Forward's success: Talent and research/evaluation partners.

In the past several years, Harmony has partnered with nationally and locally recognized organizations that excel in leader PD and coaching to design and implement its foundational ILT *Support and Feedback* model. These include Relay Graduate School of Education, Teach Like A Champion, and Teach Plus. Harmony enjoys strong relationships with these partners and plans to continue the relationships through the use of matching funds (for continuation of support) and TSL funds (for design and delivery of new PD offerings and opportunities).

Research and evaluation partners have also informed and assessed Harmony's HCMS. Most significantly, Harmony has a strong relationship with CTAC, which has evaluated multiple grant-funded projects for Harmony. CTAC has agreed to play the role of evaluator should Harmony earn the 2023 TSL grant. The long-standing nature of this partnership means that CTAC is deeply familiar with Harmony's goals and model; it is well-positioned, then, to accurately assess progress and provide recommendations and technical assistance based on data. The letters of support provided in Appendix C further illustrate partners' commitment.

Broad Support of Stakeholders: Harmony deeply values stakeholder support. In preparing this proposal, the network a) references evidence that stakeholders support the existing HCMS, b) bases TILT Forward on highly-supported stakeholder recommendations for HCMS improvements, and c) includes plans for ongoing stakeholder engagement to sustain support.

TILT evaluation findings show that Harmony ILT members, central office leaders, and district leaders already support the foundational HCMS because they see the impact on student and educator outcomes (Appendix C).

Key TILT Forward components respond to recommendations from the TILT evaluation, which was informed by thousands of stakeholders. These include, for example, improving PD, the consistency of evaluation implementation, and the breadth of leader incentives (page 8 and Appendix C). By acting on this stakeholder input, Harmony deepens support for the project.

Harmony has also designed strong change management practices that ensure ongoing awareness, understanding, buy-in, and ownership among those impacted. TILT Forward includes plans to regularly communicate project updates, including data, with program participants to share bright spots and solicit feedback. Harmony's new Leader Advisory Cabinets (page 14) will engage leaders to provide ongoing input and feedback on program design and implementation.

Harmony's implementation plans include training to equip leaders with any new knowledge, skills, or behaviors needed to successfully implement TILT Forward.

Together, Harmony's plans for financial and operational management, partnership, and stakeholder engagement create a strong blueprint for project sustainability.

By integrating TILT Forward into an already-strong foundational HCMS, Harmony is well-positioned to bring network-wide instructional leadership to the next level and thereby improve student achievement, culture and inclusion, and college and career readiness.